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Icons in Needle and Thread

08.24.2011 | Catholic, Fine Arts

Images of Mary the mother of Jesus, in thread, embroidery and beadwork by artist Nancy Goes will be highlighted in a new exhibit at the University of Dayton's Marian Library.

"With Needle and Thread -- Beaded Portraits of Mother and Child" will be on display Sept. 6 through Nov. 11 in the Marian Library Gallery on the seventh floor of the University of Dayton's Roesch Library. It's free and open to the public. Hours for the Marian Library are 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday; Saturday and Sunday by appointment by calling 937-229-4214.

Goes has been a fiber artist and graphic designer for more than 40 years. She graduated from the University of Wisconsin with a degree in art with emphasis on drawing and painting. Over the years she has worked in various media as a studio artist and has taught many workshops. She is currently exploring the artwork of religious icons in bead embroidery.

Small and intimate in size, many of the 30 pieces on display are worked in bead embroidery and collage, evoking the glistening gold and precious gems of traditional religious icons of the Orthodox Church.

"As a woman and mother, I have been strongly attracted to the icons of the Virgin Mary, mother of god," Goes said in her artist's statement. "She is the ultimate role model for the Christian woman. She is the epitome of sacrificial and unconditional love."

The Rev. Johann Roten, S.M., director of research and special projects for the Marian Library/International Marian Research Institute, said Goes is working in an art form traditionally associated with Mary.

"There is a very old tradition of depicting Mary when she was visited by the archangel as engaged in spinning, weaving and embroidery," Roten said. "It's an important motif of Mary in art and we hope this exhibit will remind people of that ancient tradition."

Roten said the bead and embroidery techniques are not easy to accomplish in the style of icons.

Also on display is series of eight small beaded pieces titled "Sketches: Creation," based on the story of the creation of the world. Each piece features four squares of glass seed beading inspired by biblical passages such as "God made two great lights — the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars," from Genesis.

Goes has exhibited her work in galleries and museums around the country including the Denver Art Museum, Visions Gallery, Wheaton College and the Biblical Arts Center. Her work has been shown in CIVA (Christians in the Visual Arts) traveling exhibitions. She is currently the Prayer Network co-coordinator for CIVA.

All of the 30 works on display are available for purchase ranging in price from \$100 to \$1,500 for the eight-piece "Sketches: Creation" series.

The University of Dayton's Marian Library/International Marian Research Institute is a center for the study of Mary, the mother of Jesus. The library holds the largest collection in the world of printed materials on Mary and thousands of pieces of Marian art, devotional items and Nativity scenes from around the world.

The Marian Library and institute can be found online at The Mary Page at <http://campus.udayton.edu/mary> (url: <http://campus.udayton.edu/mary>).

For information, contact Sister M. Jean Frisk, S.S.M., assistant for art and special projects for the Marian Library at friskjem@notes.udayton.edu.